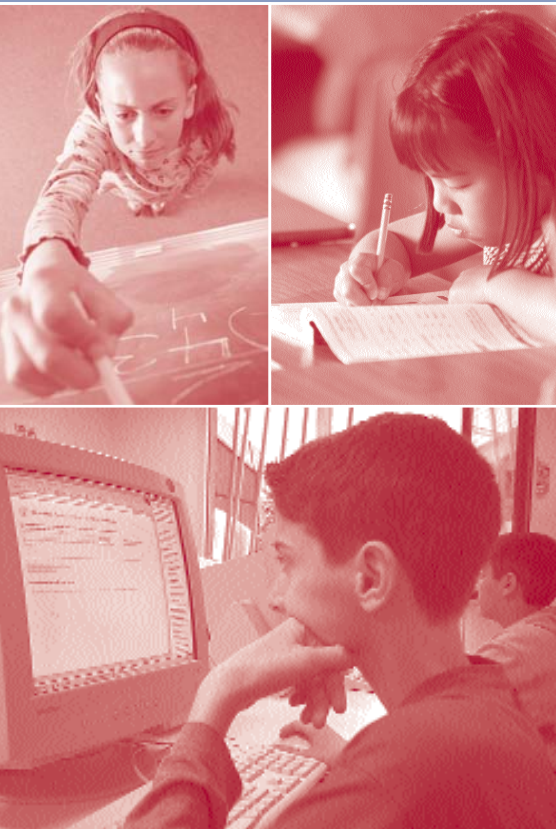


State Representative **Bob Kuzman**



Session Report



- ☒ The New State Budget
- ☒ Economic Development Initiatives
- ☒ Fighting Crime
- ☒ Changes to Adoption Proceedings

INDIANA'S NEW BUDGET



School Funding Cuts and Increased Property Taxes

The new state budget that passed by a narrow margin increases property taxes and, at the same time, cuts funding for local schools. After years of bipartisan efforts to reform education and reduce property taxes, the majority party has approved a budget that will cut state funding for many schools and raise property taxes by nearly \$850 million.

I voted "NO" on the final version of the state budget because of the negative impact it will have on education, children and those who pay property taxes. I believe there will be many victims of the new state budget.

There are no minimum guarantees in state funding for schools, which means more than 140 school corporations will receive less money. Those corporations will be forced into eliminating teachers, cutting programs and increasing class sizes. Any additional funding for public schools will come primarily from raising local property taxes.

There will be reduced state support through the Property Tax Replacement Credit (PTRC), another move that will increase local property taxes. This eliminates the promise of just three years ago to provide more state support to combat rising property taxes in light of the historic and controversial statewide reassessment.

In addition, funding for the program that provides health care for the elderly, disabled and children will increase by five percent, although bipartisan experts have predicted a 10-percent growth. State assistance for road repairs and improvements will decrease as well.

It is a shame that the legacy of this session will be passage of a state budget that turns its back on Indiana's schoolchildren and property taxpayers. For anyone who cares about education and local taxpayers, it is simply indefensible.



Fighting Crime

Senate Bill 164 will require a person convicted of possession of child pornography with a prior conviction for the same offense to register as a sex offender.

House Bill 1057 makes it a Class C infraction for a person in the passenger compartment of a motor vehicle to possess an alcoholic beverage container that has been opened, has a broken seal or from which some of the contents have been removed.

House Bill 1099 will make the offense of voyeurism a Class D felony instead of a Class B misdemeanor if a person is convicted of the offense a subsequent time.

Senate Bill 525 authorizes the state to seek a sentence of life imprisonment without parole for a person who commits a Class A felony constituting a sex offense against a child and who also has a prior unrelated Class A felony conviction for a sex offense against a child.



Making Strides for Economic Development

The big story for Northwest Indiana this session was the economic development initiatives which were passed allowing for greater opportunities to create, maintain and increase good-paying jobs.



ECONOMIC TOOLS

The very first bill passed into law this session created a new public-private entity—the Indiana Economic Development Corporation—to serve as the leader for development efforts across our state.

Other measures were passed which will extend the deadline for property tax abatements and TIF districts, codify the Research and Development Sales Tax Exemption/Credit, and give additional tax breaks to small business owners to reduce the potential that they will be harmed by government regulation.

Senate Bill 1 also allows the Indiana Economic Development Corporation to designate up to three areas as Global Commerce Centers to promote job growth and employment.

SPURRING NEW GROWTH

Much of the economic development language that passed was aimed at drawing in new businesses to support job growth. One of those measures will speed up the process of preparing sites for development, making them “shovel-ready.”



Another bill establishes a Headquarters Relocation Credit to entice corporations to move their operations to Indiana.

NORTHWEST INDIANA REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

For several years, legislators and civic leaders have been working to establish an infrastructure in Northwest Indiana that will help encourage and sustain long-term economic success. I am happy to report that we were able to accomplish that goal this session.

House Bill 1120 contained three components which will be vitally important to growth in our area: funding for improvement of the current operations of the South Shore Railroad and plans for its expansion in the future, funding for the expansion of the Gary/Chicago Airport facilities, and the dedication of resources to improve the Lake Michigan shoreline.

These changes, when implemented together, will help to showcase Northwest Indiana as a thriving economy with opportunities for meaningful work and a high quality of life.

2005 Session Highlights



Rep. Kuzman discusses legislation with Rep. Woody Burton (R-Greenwood).



Rep. Kuzman listens to debate on the House floor.



Rep. Kuzman talks to students who are visiting the Statehouse.



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Publications Available

Rep. Kuzman has the following publications which are available free of charge. To order, call his office at 800-382-9842 or visit his website at www.in.gov/H19.

Relax...an informational booklet for senior citizens

Guide to State Agencies

Hoosier Fun and Facts for elementary school-aged children

Higher Education for those interested in pursuing a higher education degree

Adoption Laws Evolve Under Kuzman's Leadership

Two important measures were passed this session which continue to build on the work Rep. Kuzman has done to reshape adoption laws in Indiana.

House Enrolled Act 1217 allows adult children who were adopted to garner information regarding social, medical, psychological, and educational records from the source through which they were adopted.

Senate Enrolled Act 422 makes two important changes by restricting mothers from giving final consent to adoption before the baby is born, and makes a waiver of notice of adoption irrevocable.

This language protects all parties involved in an adoption by ensuring that the birth

mother be clear about her choice to have her baby adopted, and by making the adoption final once it has been decided upon.

Rep. Kuzman was adopted at birth and has worked over

the past nine years to improve the adoption system for parents and children statewide.

In addition to co-authoring both HEA 1217

and SEA 422, Rep. Kuzman has carried a number of other important bills regarding the adoption process. One of those measures established a system for mothers and fathers who gave their children up for adoption to register where they are located in order to make contact.

Rep. Kuzman and his wife, Cheryl, adopted a son in 2001.



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